O To Be Thirteen Again

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August 2, 1969 may not have been a memorable date in the history of the world, but it was – or should have been – for me, because it was the day I became a teenager. I would be the first person to admit that my teens were not particularly happy, but the world was a different place then. Recently I was doing some research on children's comics for that period. It was amusing to read a feature in the May 5, 1973 issue of the girls' comic *Judy* about Gary Glitter growing up. He was all the rage with young girls then; unfortunately in later life this adulation was reciprocated in a particularly sordid fashion. (1)

But far more fascinating was a letter that appeared in the same comic four years earlier, on my thirteenth birthday. Eileen Jewell of Morpeth who was shown sitting astride her pride and joy, enthused: "This is a photograph of me and my pony, Nigger. Nigger is 24 years old and he used to work in the coal pits but has now retired."

Although this sturdy animal was very elderly in equine terms, Miss Jewell said he would live a long time yet.

On August 17, the previous year, another girls' comic, *Bunty*, published an advertisement that would turn today's "anti-*racists*" apoplectic with rage. Robertson's, the jam and marmalade manufacturer, was offering a free collection of model golliwogs, including an entire golly football team, to readers who sent in the requisite number of labels from their products. There were also golly brooches, golly pens, and paper gollies to stick on your bedroom wall. Perish the thought that nowadays any child should stick one on her classroom wall.

The most notable feature of the ongoing hysteria over the evils of so-called *racism* is that in general whites make far more noise about it than blacks and other non-whites, unless they are playing the race card for a specific purpose [eg to escape a murder conviction (2)]. In 1998, a two foot high golliwog at a school came under fire because it was said by some to be a symbol of "Black oppression", to which one parent, Edwin Ogbogu, replied "It's a cuddly toy"; he believed the school should keep it. (3)

In another much publicised incident, a time-serving police officer with two commendations for bravery was dismissed for shouting at a youth struggling in the back of a police van to "Sit down, you black bastard." Steve Hutt (4) was finally reinstated after a public outcry which led to him receiving hundreds of letters of support. (5)

More recently, we have seen a Conservative shadow cabinet minister sacked for making a joke at a rugby dinner about Pakistanis being ten a penny in Britain. (6) Incredibly, Gerald Hartup, who once had a reputation as a civil libertarian, reported this non-incident to the Chief Constable of Cheshire asking him to liaise with the misnamed Commission for Racial Equality and the Crown Prosecution Service. Leaving aside the fact that if Ann Winterton had made a similar joke about lawyers or politicians no one would have batted an eyelid, it is hardly surprising that the streets are not safe for people of any race to walk with precious police time and resources being wasted by pillocks like Hartup.

This leads me to recall a rather humorous incident that happened to me in 1973. When I left school I went to work for the Wimpey construction group as a laboratory technician. One day a group of us were sitting in the back of a van waiting for the driver when a black workman wearing a donkey jacket approached us. Somebody made a joke about a black Irishman, which he couldn't have heard, but he knew where we were coming from, and as he passed the van he looked at us and boomed "Hello dere" in a deep Negro voice, an act that reduced us to fits of laughter. (7) This was very sporting of him; it is a sad indictment of our supposedly liberal and tolerant society that if he were to make such a remark today he would probably be committing a criminal offence.

Of course, there are limits, in its November 16, 1998 issue, the black newspaper *The Voice* reported the case of a fire officer who allegedly told trainees that he'd rather be *gay* than black. Now that is one hell of a racial insult! I hope he dies of AIDS.

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Notes And References

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(1) In November 1999, Glitter was gaoled for four months for downloading child porn from the Internet, and has been a fugitive from the tabloids ever since. He was cleared of a more serious charge of having sex with a 14 year old girl in the 1980s.
(2) Successfully in the case of O.J. Simpson, unsuccessfully in the case of Satpal Ram.
(3) The *Voice*, August 10, 1998, page 3.
(4) Ironically, if Hutt had planted drugs on this kid or fitted him up for assault, the authorities would not have batted an eyelid.
(5) His sacking was reduced to a fine of 13 days' salary said to be "in excess of £1,000" – I can see why he wanted his job back! Then Home Secretary Jack Straw appears to have intervened; Hutt's supporters included the *Daily Mail* newspaper, a black woman detective, and the mother of the kid he'd racially abused!
(6) Having said that, race aside, the joke was a bit risqué and could have caused offence, but an apology should have been sufficient.
(7) I can date this precisely to November 14, 1973 because it was the day of a royal wedding. Either on our way to the *Cutty Sark* or on the way back, we saw them in their open carriage.